



**Gulf of Mexico Program  
Policy Review Board  
Meeting Summary  
New Orleans, LA**

**December 2, 2004**

<b>Organization:</b>	<b>Policy Review Board Member:</b>	<b>Present:</b>	<b>Absent:</b>
<b>EPA</b>	Jimmy Palmer ( Federal Chair)	X	
<b>Louisiana</b>	Karen Gautreaux (State Chair Alternate) Dugan Sabins (Alternate)	X	
<b>Alabama</b>	Barnett Lawley		X
<b>Florida</b>	Lynn Griffin (Alternate)	X	
<b>Mississippi</b>	Phil Bass (Alternate)	X	
<b>Texas</b>	Vacant - Bruce Moulton (Alternate)	X	
<b>HHS</b>	George Hoskin	X	
<b>DOC</b>	Spencer Garrett (Alternate)	X	
<b>USDA</b>	Wil Fontenot (Alternate)	X	
<b>DOI</b>	Columbus Brown (Alternate)	X	
<b>DOHS</b>	Vacant		
<b>DOD</b>	Bob Bosenberg (Alternate)	X	
<b>NASA</b>	Ed Johnson	X	
<b>CAC</b>	Robert Crowe	X	
<b>CAC</b>	Paul MacLean	X	
<b>BAC</b>	Mike Lyons	X	
<b>GRN</b>	Paul Templet	X	
<b>CSCA</b>	Joel Yelverton (Alternate)	X	
<b>AFBF-GC</b>	Ron Harrell (Alternate)		X

1. **Roll Call - Welcome and Introductions of the Board**

Jimmy Palmer, Federal Co-Chair, EPA Regional Administrator, Region 4, welcomed the Board and introduced Mayor Richard Greene, EPA Regional Administrator, Region 6. Dugan Sabins welcomed the Board on behalf of the State Co-Chair, Dr. Mike McDaniel, Secretary of Louisiana's Department of Environmental Quality.

On behalf of the Board, the Co-Chairs congratulated all the Gulf Guardian Award winners and thanked the Gulf Program for the excellent ceremony aboard the Creole Queen Riverboat.

2. **Overview of Meeting Agenda & Objectives/Status of Follow-up Action Items**

Bryon Griffith, Director of the Gulf of Mexico Program Office, reviewed completion of Action Items from the previous meeting in March 2004.

3. **Executive Order Status/Update/Next Steps**

Bryon Griffith reported that he had presented a briefing on the Executive Order to EPA's Administrator in June 2004. The Executive Order has been endorsed by the Gulf Governors and all other stakeholders. Jimmy Palmer commented that the Gulf of Mexico is a priority area, and he is looking forward to the day when the Executive Order will be signed and the Gulf will be recognized for its value to the Nation. Mr. Palmer and Mayor Greene both expressed confidence that the Executive Order will be signed.

4. **White House Interagency Working Group on Methylmercury - (Overview & Status Report - re: June 2004 Report on Methylmercury in the Gulf of Mexico)**

Dr. Gene Whitney, Executive Office of the President, Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources, presented a report on Methylmercury in the Gulf of Mexico: State of Knowledge and Research Needs. According to Dr. Whitney, the Gulf of Mexico is an excellent prototype for the rest of the country. The initial focus on the Gulf Region is because of a request from Senator Sessions from Alabama. There is not sufficient data nor knowledge of the source for mercury in the Gulf. The focus should be on research needs that can be addressed by Federal agencies. The Working Group is asking for consideration of the following recommendations:

1. Research and information priority areas identified in the report be provided to the Gulf Program Director for consideration in the science and budget planning processes of the Program.
2. Gulf Program should review these needs annually to develop and update a research strategy for Federal agencies to address mercury issues in the Gulf of Mexico Region that will be implemented through the planning and budget processes of member agencies.

3. The Gulf Program should coordinate these activities with the Gulf States as well as with the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission and Gulf States Fishery Council and parallel activities outside the Gulf region.

Members of the Board commented that it is important that the states partner to coordinate data. Dr. Whitney encouraged the development of a plan and would like to work with the agencies to implement the plan. A motion was unanimous for the Board to submit a letter to EPA Administrator Leavitt in support of the recommendations in the Report. The Board requested that the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission give a presentation at the next meeting.

**5. The Gulf of Mexico Caucus (Status & Priorities)**

Chris Schons, Legislative Assistant to Congresswoman Katherine Harris, informed the Board of the formation of a Gulf of Mexico Caucus which will create a cohesive identity for Gulf of Mexico issues. The ratio of funding for the Gulf is not equitable, and Congresswoman Harris hopes to use the leverage of the Caucus to support Programs that make the Gulf a better place to live. Three of her priorities have been: 1. Short Sea Shipping; 2. Gulf Transportation Corridor; 3. Red Tide.

**6. Gulf Hypoxia Meets Industry-led Solutions (ILS) - Review of ILS Proposal for Providing Collaborative Support**

James Harsdorf, ILS Member (Wisconsin), reported on the Industry-Led Solutions Gulf of Mexico Meetings. The producers find that it is in their best interest to be pro-active in their approach, communications, and solutions. They have diverse stakeholders and are committed to being community-led, assessment-based, and performance driven. The producers are committed to sound science and an information infrastructure that enables them to formulate direction for the industry. Guiding principles: solutions must start at the local level; producers embrace practices that are economically feasible; goals should be achievable; communicate progress and success; agriculture needs more data for baselines to establish and monitor progress; partnerships.

The Industry-Led Solutions Objective Statement is that through collaboration and cooperation, to develop, lead, and carry out a voluntary local basin-wide strategy of nonpoint source nutrient management in each state's critical watersheds, ultimately reducing the delivery of excess nutrients to the Gulf. The ILS proposed Action Plan strategy includes 11 recommendations to assist in implementing the Hypoxia Action Plan. The producers will work with USDA and EPA to determine the opportunities to employ the ILS' network, strategies, and tools within the Sub-basin Team.

## **7. Report on Evolving Strategies - Gulf Alliance**

Lynn Griffin, Florida Department of Environmental Quality, reported on the Gulf States' dialogue to develop a stronger Gulf Alliance in response to Governor Jeb Bush's invitation to form a more active regional approach to determining restoration goals, establishing research priorities, and participating in the planning and implementation of the Integrated Ocean Observing System framework. The Alliance is the ability for the five Gulf States to mobilize and focus on priorities and commonalities.

### **Coastal America - Update on GMP Efforts to Help Strengthen the Program Regionally and Nationally**

Bryon Griffith presented a review of the reorganization of Coastal America and the acknowledgement that the Gulf of Mexico Program received from James Connaughton, Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality, for the assistance provided to Coastal America in undertaking a strategic assessment of the National Partnership and developing a workplan modeled after the Gulf Program's workplan. The workplan was unanimously endorsed by the Principals (9 participating Department/Agency Under Secretaries). The impact on the Gulf Program is that the Coastal America collaborative capacities directly overlap with the Gulf Program issues and broad leveraging can be exploited at the project level.

The Board requested that the letter from CEQ be sent to all PRB members.

## **8. Program Accomplishments Report (FY04)**

Bryon Griffith, Director of the Gulf Program, presented a review of the Gulf Program Workplan progress for FY 2004. Accomplishments included: Projects were supported in 163 impaired segments achieving the 5-year 20% baseline; a nutrient characterization database was developed; a business plan/enterprise model was completed for the National Coastal America Partnership to apply capacity and support in implementing the GMP Workplan; a Bacterial Source Tracking workshop was held to coordinate and implement methodologies; a strategic assessment process for coastal habitats in Mobile Bay was supported; a consumer survey indicates that vibrio vulnificus education efforts have made 57% of all raw oyster consumers aware of the risk and 37% of at-risk consumers are eating fewer oysters; a synoptic survey of mercury in marine and estuarine fish from the Gulf was supported; the Project Team reached a consensus on uniform consumption advisory for mercury in king mackerel; a mercury database developed by the Program was updated to include data available through September 2003; a workshop was held to work toward providing a monitoring and forecasting system for harmful algal blooms; a draft report was developed on the collaborative review of monitoring, sampling, and reporting protocols utilized by the 11 binational states; 3, 932 acres were restored, enhanced, or protected bringing to 13, 368 toward the 20,000 acre goal for 2009; invasive species assistance was provided to Mobile Bay; support was provided for shiptime to conduct hypoxia sampling; a workshop on Industry Led Solutions was

supported to focus on the major environmental and economic implications of hypoxia and the role of agricultural leadership; the Fifth Annual ceremony is planned to present the 2004 Gulf Guardian Awards.

**9. Review and Endorsement of Proposed FY05 Program Workplan**

The FY05 Workplan Subobjectives and Annual Performance Goals were unanimously endorsed with the recommendation of modifications and revisions proposed by the Management Committee and Comprehensive Meeting.

**10. Roundtable Discussion/Wrap-up and Next Steps**

John Saia, retiring member from the Corps of Engineers, expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to serve on the Policy Review Board and the importance of the Gulf of Mexico Program.

Karen Gautreaux, Louisiana, told the Board that she was truly impressed with the accomplishments of the Gulf Program over the years and expressed continuing support from Louisiana.

Wil Fontenot, USDA, emphasized the importance of sponsoring watersheds and of local and public involvement.

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